

21 MARCH 1978

Approved For Release 2004/10/12 : CIA-RDP81M00980R002000090027-2

CIA chief eliminates 608 jobs in operations

Washington Bureau of The Sun

Washington—Adm. Stansfield M. Turner dropped the other shoe at the Central Intelligence Agency yesterday, announcing the elimination of 608 jobs in the agency's operations directorate.

But spokesmen quickly explained that only about 50 people now on the job actually are being fired. Others of the 608 already are gone: resigned, retired or reassigned.

"The rate of attrition has been greater than we expected," an official said. He added a further ameliorative note: of the 212 whose jobs were eliminated in the clan-

destine service last October, more than 50 have remained in other agency assignments.

The announcement carried a quite different tone from that of last fall, when Admiral Turner, the director of central intelligence, labeled those who complained of being fired after long service as "cry-babies." Morale plummeted in the operations directorate, which includes the clandestine services, as did that of the entire agency.

"Make no mistake about it," an official said. "Those 820 slots are being eliminated as scheduled. We don't want anyone to think the admiral is going soft."

But the admiral, who retained his Navy rank when President Carter appointed him director at the CIA, appeared to have become more diplomatic. None of the 50 who will lose their jobs actually must leave before October 1. And those who would become eligible for retirement in the year after that may remain long enough to qualify for pensions.

The 50 will be notified individually during the next two weeks, a spokesman said, except for those with GS-14 ratings—those nearing senior career status. An evaluation board that will determine which GS-14's survive has yet to meet.

Of the jobs being eliminated, "only a handful" were reported to be outside the headquarters staff here. The point has been made frequently to counter suggestions that foreign operations—intelligence-gathering—have been affected.

Out of a total of about 16,000 CIA employees, more than 4,000 are in the clandestine services, about half the number at the peak of the war in Indochina. Successive directors have pared that figure, and it fell to Admiral Turner, a self-confident Navy man, to cut it to the bone.

In the considerable public debate since the plans to reduce the staff were announced last year, Admiral Turner has explained his approach several times. It comes down to an announced determination to cut out deadwood, removing excess while making way for young, bright officers to move upward.

To his critics, he has been unnecessarily brutal. And some of them worry that he reflects unwarranted idealism in the administration, a judgment that secret intelligence gathered by people rather than technology no longer counts for much.

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